Journal of Political Science

Volume 35 | Number 1 Article 7

November 2007

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Using the 1996 National Black Election Study, I estimate black voter turnout in the 1996 U. S. national election to learn whether the factors used commonly to explain black voter turnout from the 1960s to the 1980s remain relevant given the improved economic status of blacks, changes in black church affiliation, and the absence of prominent black political candidates. That is, did institutional involvement and group consciousness foster a comparable level of voter turnout among blacks in 1996 as they did in previous decades and elections? The data show that they do not; standard socioeconomic and demographic characteristics and psychological involvement played more prominent roles. The factors used to explicate black voter turnout from the 1960s to the 1980s have lost some, but hardly all, of their relevance. Other considerations seem to take precedence over the traditional explanations of black voter turnout. Race-neutral factors seem to supercede race-specific forces.

Two important economic and social trends have been underway in the black community for several decades. One trend is that over the past thirty to forty years, blacks have made gains in the economic, social, and political arenas (Jaynes and Williams 1989; Dawson 1994). In the period 1960-1991, the size of the black middle class had more than doubled (Dawson 1994). While still vulnerable, nearly one third of these blacks are employed in middle-class occupations. A second trend is that black membership in mainstream black churches (Baptists and Methodists), which encourage political participation, has declined, while membership in megachurches and mainstream Islam, Pentecostal, and Catholic churches has increased (Harris 1999). This trend is worthy of attention because this means that

THE JOURNAL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
VOLUME 35 2007 PAGES 183-211

blacks are increasingly gravitating toward churches that provide fewer political stimuli and inducements. These changes in the black community have important political implications. Specifically, they work in tandem to lessen the encouraging influence of race in the electoral participation of blacks. Politically speaking, race (consciousness or cohesion) is on the decline. Therefore, there is a need to revisit the power of race-specific determinants for explaining black voter turnout and maybe a need to intensify focus on the robustness of race-neutral factors.

To be sure, a number of studies have attested to the influences of race, religion, and church on black voter turnout since serious analysis of black voters began in the 1960s (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960; Verba and Nie; 1972; Milbrath and Goel 1977; Miller, Gurin, Gurin, and Malanchuk 1981; Morris 1984; Conway 1985; Walton 1985; Gurin, Hatchett, and Jackson 1989; Tate 1991; Peterson 1992; Tate 1993; Dawson 1994; Harris 1994; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Calhoun-Brown 1996; Harris 1999; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999). Race, religion, and church go hand-in-hand when explicating black voter turnout. The black church, especially its political role, helps to reinforce the politicization and salience of group consciousness and racial group interests for individual blacks (Dawson 1994). Disseminating information about what is best for the race by black institutions (for instance the church) and black leaders (for example, black clergy) reinforce racial interests (Dawson 1994). The political actions of black ministers and churches are routine in the black community (Harris 1999). Churches provide opportunities for learning and developing organizational and participatory skills that are applicable to political participation (Morris 1984; Peterson 1992; Tate 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

The purpose of this study is to take stock of the commonly-known factors driving black voter turnout. A reexamination is necessary given blacks' improved status in society over the past three to four decades and the shifts in church affiliation. However, there are other reasons to reevaluate the significance of race

on black voter turnout. Another is that the studies estimating black voter turnout in the past took data from the Sixties (Verba and Nie 1972; Shingles 1981; Guterbock and London 1983; Harris 1999) and Eighties (Tate 1991, 1993; Dawson 1994; Calhoun-Brown 1996; Harris 1999) when present were formidable forces that competed with race, citizens may have been primed to be more conscious of race. Bobo and Gilliam (1990) and Tate (1991) also cast doubt on the influence of race on black voter turnout beyond these turbulent times because some studies that established this association used data taken during the civil rights movement. While they do not test their suspicions, they imply that the political climate of protest and activism may have done more to increase black political participation than race consciousness. In support of this notion, Tate (1991) discovers that race identification did not have a consistent impact on black voter turnout in the 1984 and 1988 presidential elections. We must also revisit the motivations behind black voter turnout in national elections because two of the major influences stimulating black voter turnout in the 1984 and 1988 elections, Jesse Jackson and Ronald Reagan, are no longer major influences on the political landscape. According to Tate (1991), Jesse Jackson's presidential candidacies generated a lot of participation among black voters and Reagan was an unpopular president with Black Americans, for he created a political climate that stimulated black voter turnout. Gurin *et al.* (1989) state that the Reagan years were characterized by a conservative political climate in which there was a reduction in civil rights action by the federal government and a lack of Black Americans in the Executive Branch and the federal judiciary.

When black institutions and leaders are influential or individual blacks have strong ties to them, racial cues dominate class cues (Dawson 1994). This is because the importance of race is solidified repeatedly and is in the forefront of listeners' minds, therefore, having a disproportionate impact. On the other hand, when black institutions and leaders are not strong or the ties of individual blacks to black institutions and leaders are weak, then

class cues would dominate race cues. Blacks with strong attachments to family, the black community, and black institutions will emphasize racial group interests more and for a longer period of time than blacks with weak attachments to family, community, and black institutions because information from other blacks has greater influence. When discussing the black utility heuristic, Dawson (1994) assumes that until the mid-1960s, regardless of personal and family economic and social statuses, race was the leading factor in determining the advancement and progress for nearly all blacks. One can conclude from this statement that race diminished in importance in subsequent years. Some report that race did become less salient in the black community (Wilson 1980).

The advances made by blacks and improvements in social position and circumstances may have resulted in the development of race-neutral attitudes known to foster greater political participation. Because of black progress, it could now be the case that the primary forces that drive whites to the polls are the same ones that increasingly encourage blacks to vote, namely social circumstances and psychological involvement (Milbrath *et al.* 1977; Conway 1985; Verba *et al.* 1995). Progress by way of higher levels of education and income and more blacks elected to political office may have raised the level of psychological involvement in politics within the black community, which in turn, increases voter turnout.

This line of reasoning is a by-product of the argument Wilson (1980) poses. He argues that when members of ethnic or racial groups gain affluence, they form associations with those who share their economic interests, despite race or ethnicity. The resulting and growing economic polarization in the black community (Dawson 1994), contribute to a breakdown in race consciousness. I do not assert that class now trumps race; instead it is suggested in this investigation that the primary driving forces behind contemporaneous black voter turnout may be categorized as race neutral. The contention is simply that with (1) black economic progress, (2) changes in religious institutional affiliation,

and to lesser degrees, (3) the use of biased or contaminated data and (4) the absence of prominent, mobilizing, political figures, the impacts of race and institutional involvement—reinforced by other blacks and black institutions—have declined, making race-neutral factors more useful for explaining black voter turnout than race-specific forces. Therefore, I maintain that the effects of black group consciousness, organizational involvement, religion, and the black church have diminished in importance, giving way to psychological factors and resurrecting the need for more emphasis on social and economic factors.

MODELING BLACK VOTER TURNOUT

Using the 1996 national election as a backdrop, I construct several models to test whether or not the primary forces that drove blacks to the polls from the 1960s to the 1980s are still relevant in 1996. Data taken from the 1996 National Black Election Study (NBES), a national survey of black respondents, are used to investigate black voter turnout in the 1996 U. S. national election. Toward that end, models are developed to capture the effects of (1) social, economic, and demographic characteristics, (2) black group consciousness, (3) institutional involvement (organizational involvement, religion and church), and (4) psychological involvement (party identification, trust in government, political engagement, and political efficacy). A thorough description of all variables in this analysis, their coding schemes, and predicted directions is in Appendix A.

Social, Economic, and Demographic Characteristics

Social, economic, and demographic factors are standard predictors explaining political participation, and more specifically, voter turnout. Political participation is influenced greatly by social position and circumstances (Campbell *et al.* 1960; Milbrath *et al.* 1977; Wolfinger and Rosenstone1980; Conway 1985; Tate 1991; Leighley and Nagler 1992; Tate 1993; Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Harris 1999; Leighley *et al.* 1999). Variables such as age, education, and income have been discovered to be

reliable predictors of voter turnout. Increasing increments on these strata often equip voters with participatory resources, social and political contacts, economic opportunities, and access to government, all of which foster active participation in politics (Milbrath *et al.* 1977; Conway 1985; Gurin *et al.* 1989). Therefore, I hypothesize that blacks are more likely to vote with increasing levels of age, education, and family income.

The effect of the environment within which black voters live is accounted for as well. Conventional wisdom suggests that southern blacks participate in politics at lower rates than blacks in other regions, which several studies have shown (Tate 1991, 1993; Calhoun-Brown 1996). However, some studies found that southern blacks participate in politics more than blacks in other regions (Bobo *et al.* 1990; Harris 1994). In spite of these discrepant findings, I expect an inverse relationship because this is the well known and anticipated direction. I anticipate southern blacks to vote with less frequency than blacks who do not live in the South. Three more individual characteristics are also taken into account, namely, gender, marital status, and home ownership. Women vote only slightly more often than men (Milbrath *et al.* 1977; Conway 1985), so I expect a positive relationship between black women and voter turnout more so than between black men and turnout. Black women are discriminated against on two fronts, their race and gender, so one can argue that black women have more motivation to vote and work within the system for change in their favor than black men. Consistent with the literature, I predict a positive relationship between being married and turnout and home ownership and turnout. Married people and homeowners are more likely to be more politically active than singles and non homeowners (Milbrath *et al.* 1977; Leighley *et al.* 1999).

Black Group Consciousness

Black group consciousness involves identifying with blacks and sharing a political awareness and ideology with respect to blacks' relative position in society plus committing oneself to action to secure black interests (Miller *et al.* 1981). Black group

consciousness is also the belief by blacks that their race is deprived, relatively speaking, and the reasons for their position in society are caused more by the social and political system than due to personal shortcomings. This framework also involves the realization that differences exist between themselves, blacks, and the dominant group, whites. As a result, there are hostilities between blacks and whites, and social barriers such as discrimination and racism are considered illegitimate because they enhance the status of whites at the expense of blacks, resulting in relative deprivation and discontent.

Miller *et al.* (1981) discuss four components of group consciousness: (1) group identification, (2) polar affect, (3) polar power, and (4) individual versus system blame. The first component, group identification, is an important ingredient of group consciousness. They suggest that group identification is the psychological feeling of belonging to a social group, sharing interests with the group, but not with others, and having an awareness of the group's status in society compared with other groups. Group identification is operationalized by how much the black respondent believes what happens to other blacks will have something to do with them. The more blacks believe that what happens to other blacks will have ripple effects to them personally, the more they will identify themselves with the group or race. Scholars (Miller *et al.* 1981; Tate 1993) find that race identification is positively related to turnout and so it is expected here that blacks who identify themselves highly with being black are more likely to report voting.

The second component of group consciousness is polar affect. Miller *et al.* (1981) describe a polar affect as the preference for members of one's group and a dislike for those not in the group. In this case, it is a positive affect toward blacks and a negative affect toward other races, but mainly whites. If polar affect matters, then blacks who rate blacks higher on a thermometer scale (approaching 100) and whites lower (approaching 0) will report voting more than blacks who when rating both races have less distance between the two ratings.

The third component of group consciousness is polar power. Miller *et al.* (1981) state that this is satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's group's status, power, or resources compared with the outgroup. If the ingroup (blacks) uses the outgroup (any other group, but most likely whites) as the reference for comparisons and perceive a lack of status, power, or resources, then deprivation will promote group consciousness. As a result, whites are seen in a more powerful or advantageous position. Blacks who perceive this as reality will consider their race deprived and powerless relative to whites. Therefore, blacks reporting they voted will perceive that the economic position of blacks is worse than whites.

The fourth and final component of group consciousness is the attribution of individual versus system blame. This refers to the object of attribution for the group's relatively low status in society. The low status could be due to either or both personal failings or the political or social system. Group consciousness would place blame on the system, or racism and discrimination, rather than on the individual. Therefore, blacks believing discrimination is the most important problem facing the black community should be more likely to state that they voted more than blacks who believe it is crime or unemployment.

Institutional Involvement

Institutional involvement is another important factor contributing to political participation (Verba *et al.* 1972; Milbrath *et al.* 1977; Conway 1985; Gurin *et al.* 1989; Tate 1991; Brady, Tate 1993; Dawson 1994; Harris 1994; Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Calhoun-Brown 1996; Harris 1999). Participants in institutions (organizations, religion, and church), broadly defined (Harris 1999), are more likely to participate in politics than those who do not. Involvement in organizations makes it easier to participate in politics and less costly to the individual because they provide opportunities that foster activism and members apply pressure to participate on fellow members. Therefore, included in this analysis are the effects of involving oneself in organizations and the influence of religion and the "black church" on

black voter turnout. Like Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) and Calhoun-Brown (1996), I recognize that black churches are not all alike and the "black church" is not a monolithic institution. The term is an oversimplification of black denominations and based on the observation that blacks and whites congregate in different churches.

Additionally, involvement in organizations promotes political participation by disseminating information and by engaging in activities that are political in nature (Tate 1993; Dawson 1994; Harris 1999). According to Tate (1993), involvement in black organizations has additional import in that they may offset the disadvantages individual blacks possess within the political arena. She argues that black organizations pool scarce resources each black individual has, they can educate their members on matters of politics, and provide incentives and motivation to participate in politics. Tate (1993) and Gurin *et al.* (1989) discovered that membership in black organizations was associated with increased political participation. Therefore, I hypothesize that blacks who are members of an organization working to improve the status of blacks and who joined an organization to solve some community problem are more likely to say they voted than blacks who are not so involved. Incorporating an item that captures the effects of community-based activities is essential, for the political participation of black clerics and churches is greater in scope than electoral politics by encouraging community building and organizing (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Harris 1999). General community-based involvement is measured against the effects of black organizational involvement and activism in the church.

There is a debate in the literature concerning the effects of religion and the church on black political participation. On one hand, some scholars claim that religion and the church dampen political participation (Frazier 1957; Lane 1959; Marx 1967; Marable 1989), that religion and church act as opiates in spite of the black church's participation in the struggle for civil rights and the presidential campaigns of Jesse Jackson. Furthermore,

the focus on otherworldly matters is considered an alternative to political participation. Religion and church place a focus on the afterlife, ignoring or accepting partially the injustices, trials, and tribulations of the day, for they are expected. Frazier (1957) contends that religion's and the church's focus on the afterlife or otherworldly concerns diminishes the importance of participating in the secular world.

A different school of thought contends that the black church has a mobilizing influence that increases the likelihood of political participation (Morris 1984; Tate 1991, 1993; Harris 1994; Calhoun-Brown 1996; Harris 1999). Many scholars argue that the black church has been a catalyst of change in American society concerning race relations and played a role in ameliorating the economic, social, and political conditions of blacks. Another argument in support of the black church as a facilitator of political participation is that it has traditionally been a source of political power in the black community, not just a religious or social base of power (Calhoun-Brown 1996; Harris 1999). Candidates for office use the black church as an instrument to gain influence and support from the black community. The church plays the dominant role in the political socialization of blacks, for the church is the agent black's credit for being the most significant factor in their learning about politics (Walton 1985). Walton also notes that beyond being a venue where political ideas and opinions are discussed and developed, the black church has been a breeding ground for many national and local black leaders. Tate (1993) suggests that church membership spurs political participation among blacks because it provides an environment that fosters participation. In church, blacks acquire political skills and are placed in a setting where political information is provided and shared. Harris (1994) adds that religion spurs political participation when political issues have a moral component and the church provides resources (social interaction and decision making) that are conducive to participation. He also finds "that religion among African Americans serves as both an organizational and psychological resource for individual and col-

lective action" (p. 42). Milbrath *et al.* (1977) and Gurin *et al.* (1989) found a positive relationship between church attendance and voter turnout. Calhoun-Brown (1996) did not find evidence that church attendance affects political participation, but she did discover that attendance at a political church is positively related to political participation. Tate (1993) also discovered that membership in a politically active church promoted black political participation, in particular, black voter turnout in the 1984 presidential election. Based on the findings above, blacks are likely to state that they voted, while blacks with opposite attitudes or experiences are not as likely to respond as voted: (1) blacks who say that religion provides some guidance in their life, (2) attend church frequently, and (3) attend a political church (they either have heard talk about the presidential campaign at church or attend a church that encouraged members to vote, or both).

Psychological Involvement

Psychological involvement is a major factor in explaining political participation. Psychological involvement is the degree to which one is interested in or concerned about politics. Individuals who are more involved in politics psychologically are more likely to participate in politics (Milbrath *et al.* 1977; Conway 1985; Tate 1991, 1993; Harris 1994; Brady *et al.* 1995; Calhoun-Brown 1996; Leighley *et al.* 1999; Mangum 2003). People involved psychologically are of higher socioeconomic status, have greater exposure to politics, an interest in politics, and strong partisan attachments. Therefore, I hypothesize that blacks who follow government, who are interested in political campaigns, and care who wins the presidential election say they turned out to vote more than their counterparts. Further, black Republicans are expected to report voting with a greater propensity than black Democrats because Republicans vote at higher rates than Democrats (Conway 1985).

The results of a factor analysis, displayed in Table 1, suggest that effects underlying following government and public affairs, interest in campaigns, and caring who wins load onto one dimension and is called Political Engagement. Additional elements of

psychological involvement include political efficacy (internal and external are specific forms of political efficacy) and political trust, called Political Efficacy. Both attitudes affect positively voter turnout (Milbrath *et al.* 1977; Conway 1985; Gurin *et al.*

Table 1
Factor Analysis of
Political Engagement and Political Efficacy Variables

	Political Engagement	Political Efficacy
Interest in Campaigns	.827	
Follow Government	.720	
Care Who Wins	.783	
Public Officials Don't Care		.822
No Say in Government		.816
Government Too Complicated		.535

1989; Tate 1991, 1993; Harris 1994; Calhoun-Brown 1996; Leighley *et al.* 1999). Citizens are more active in government when they feel they can affect government (internal political efficacy) and when they perceive government is responsive to them (external political efficacy). Of major import to this analysis, Shingles (1981), Guterbock *et al.* (1983), and Mangum (2003) discovered that political efficacy is positively related to black political participation. As a result, the expectation is that blacks who feel efficacious politically are hypothesized to report voting more than the politically inefficacious. Specifically, blacks who think public officials do not care what they think, that they have no say in what the government does, and believe that politics and government is complicated to understand are not likely to report voting.

Like political efficacy, political trust is positively related to turnout overall (Milbrath *et al.* 1977; Conway 1985; Gurin *et al.* 1989; Tate 1991, 1993; Harris 1994; Calhoun-Brown 1996; Leighley *et al.* 1999). Persons who trust government are likely to believe that government works to improve the lives of its citizens, while citizens who lack trust in government (cynical citi-

zens) are likely to think government is beholden to a few individuals or special interests, is corrupt, self-serving or all of the above (Milbrath 1977; Conway 1985). Surprisingly, for blacks, research presents different results. Shingles (1981), Guterbock *et al.* (1983), and Mangum (2003) found that blacks are more likely to participate in politics when they exhibit high levels of internal political efficacy and low levels of political trust. They argue that low levels of trust in government bring about increased political participation because it allows blacks to blame the system or government for their deprived or oppressed status in life. This provides motivation to participate in politics to change their circumstances. Therefore, a negative relationship between trust and the turnout response is expected.

DATA AND METHODS

To capture the effects of (1) social, economic, and demographic characteristics, (2) black group consciousness, (3) institutional involvement (organizational involvement, religion, and church), and (4) psychological involvement (party identification, trust in government, political engagement, and political efficacy), I use survey items taken from the 1996 National Black Election Study. This data set is a telephone survey of 1,216 voting-eligible blacks. With such a large sample of black respondents I can test the above hypotheses without suffering from the problem of a small sample size of blacks that plague so many other analyses. Logistic regression was used to analyze the data because the dependent variable is dichotomous.

The following question, taken from the 1996 National Black Election Study, is used to operationalize the dependent variable, Turnout: "In talking to people about elections, we find that a lot of people are not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. How about you, did you vote in the elections this November?" This question was coded one if the black respondent voted and zero if the black respondent did not vote. In 1996, 656 out of 1,216 (53.9%) black respondents stated that they voted in the November elections,

while 203 (16.7%) did not. The remaining 357 (29.4%) blacks did not know whether they voted or refused to answer. The number declaring that they turned out to vote is possibly higher than the actual number. However, there is no way of validating turnout for this data set. Therefore, I am estimating the reported, not actual or validated, turnout of blacks.

Because the dependent variable is reported turnout, it is crucial to account for the bias inherent in reporting turnout results. Therefore, the effects of the race of the interviewer and targets for mobilization are included in each model as controls. Davis (1997) found that black respondents show a marked degree of respect and deference to the interviewer, for they acquiesce and hide their true responses. Quite possibly, when interviewed by a white interviewer, blacks over reported voting more so than they would if interviewed by a black interviewer. The race of the interviewer is expected to have such an effect and is hypothesized to be inversely related to turnout since the coding scheme has a white interviewer coded 2 and a black interviewer is coded 3 (other is coded 1). Also, Wielhouwer (2000) found that blacks who were mobilized were more likely to vote than blacks who were not. So, blacks who were contacted by at least one the political parties are expected to report voting more than blacks who were not contacted.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Are the same factors that served as catalysts to voting among blacks from the 1960s to the 1980s among the same factors that press blacks to vote in 1996? The answer lies in the performance of each model developed to estimate black voter turnout in Tables 2-6. However, before discussing each model in detail, a few general comments regarding them are made first. The Social, Economic, and Demographics Model does an adequate job of explaining a reasonable amount of variation by survey data standards (18.4%, predicting 78.4% of the cases correctly). The Psychological Involvement Model explains 26.2% of the variance (80.3% cases predicted correctly). The Institutional Involvement

Model accounts for 11.4% of the variation with 79.3% cases predicted correctly. The Black Group Consciousness Model, with an R Square of 5.6%, predicted correctly the fewest number of cases, (76.2%). These findings suggest that black turnout hinges less on the power of race, religion, and institutional activity as it did in the past. Black turnout depends more on factors concerned with how well blacks are involved in politics psychologically. The most robust models are the ones that do not focus on race or race conscious-enhancing institutions. Perhaps, as I argued above, due to black advances in the social and economic spheres and shifts in church affiliation, the significance of race for determining black voter turnout has declined. It has been replaced with race-neutral attitudes and predictors.

Social, Economic, and Demographic Characteristics Model

In Table 2 are the logistic regression results of the social, economic, and demographic model. While this model only ex-

Table 2
Logistic Regression Model of
Social, Economic, and Demographic Characteristics

Independent Variables	b	SE
Age	.045‡	.010
Education	.489‡	.101
Family Income	.002	.048
South	.326↑	.217
Gender	.438†	.212
Marriage	-.323	.254
Homeowner	.324†	.191
Race of Interviewer	-.476‡	.180
Mobilization	.648‡	.271
Constant	-1.740‡	.685
Total Cases	634	
Nagelkerke R Square	0.184	
Cases Predicted Correctly (%)	78.4	
-2 Log Likelihood	606.698	

↑ = $p < .10$, one-tailed test ‡ = $p < .01$, one-tailed test † = $p < .05$, one-tailed test.

plains 18.4% of the variation, it does a very good job of detecting relationships. From the table, we see that the Age, Education, South, Gender, Homeowner variables are all related to black voter turnout. All these variables are in the expected direction. Blacks who are older, well educated, live outside the South, female, and own a home are more likely to report voting than their black counterparts. These factors were hypothesized to be positively related to turnout because increasing increments on these strata are argued to be associated with exposure to politics, knowledge of and experience with government and political matters, contact of the political nature, and "stakes in the system" or community. Family Income and Marriage are unrelated to turnout.

Black Group Consciousness Model

Table 3 presents the logistic regression results of the Black Group Consciousness Model. It explains a paltry 5.6% of the total amount of variance. Black group consciousness is surprisingly a relatively poor framework to use for explaining black voter turnout. This does not mean that race does not matter entirely, for three of four variables are significant (Group Identifi-

Table 3
Logistic Regression Model of
Black Group Consciousness

Independent Variables	b	SE
Group Identification	.125↑	.087
Polar Affect	.007↑	.005
Polar Power	-.244†	.138
Individual vs. System Blame	-.018	.222
Race of Interviewer	-.260↑	.169
Mobilization	.842‡	.245
Constant	1.472‡	.513
Total Cases	647	
Nagelkerke R Square	.056	
Cases Predicted Correctly (%)	76.2	
-2 Log Likelihood	685.572	

↑ = $p < .10$, one-tailed test † = $p < .05$, one-tailed test ‡ = $p < .01$, one-tailed test

cation, Polar Affect, and Polar Power). Concerning black group consciousness, blacks who identify themselves with other blacks, feel more warm or more favorable toward blacks than whites, and believe their race is worse off than whites are likely to report having turned out to vote than blacks who believe the opposite. The Individual vs. System Blame variable is the only black group consciousness variable not to reach an acceptable level of significance.

Institutional Involvement Model

The logistic regression results of the Institutional Involvement Model are found in Table 4. This model has an R Square of 11.4%, but makes a modest attempt at establishing relationships between institutional involvement and black voter turnout. Membership in a black organization and a community-type organization motivate blacks to vote. The Political Church variable is positive and significant, indicating that context matters, for blacks who attend churches where they discuss politics and encouraged to vote are more likely to report that they turned out to vote than members who do not attend political churches. Unlike

Table 4
Logistic Regression Model of Institutional Involvement

Independent Variables	b	SE
Black Organization	.576↑	.255
Community Organization	.386↑	.228
Religious Importance	-.156	.167
Church Attendance	.057	.089
Political Church	.436†	.129
Race of Interviewer	-.494†	.173
Mobilization	.781†	.258
Constant	-2.174†	.643
Total Cases	682	
Nagelkerke R Square	.114	
Cases Predicted Correctly (%)	79.3	
-2 Log Likelihood	663.342	

↑ = $p < .05$, one-tailed test. † = $p < .01$, one-tailed test

previous studies, this analysis shows that no longer are religion and regular church attendance sufficient and reliable predictors of black voter turnout. It seems that religion may have vacillated from a mobilizer of black voters to an opiate and the black church must make direct, explicit overtures to members to influence the turnout decision or engage directly in politics themselves.

Psychological Involvement Model

Table 5 displays the logistic regression results of the psychological involvement model. This model explains 26.2% of the total variation. It does a very good job of detecting significant factors related to turnout as well. We see that black voters who are engaged politically and efficacious politically are more likely to report voting than blacks who are not engaged in like manner and blacks who lack political efficacy (Political Engagement and

Table 5
Logistic Regression
Model of Psychological Involvement

Independent Variables	b	SE
Party Identification	.368‡	.099
Trust in Government	-.208	.176
Political Engagement	.851‡	.102
Political Efficacy	-.184†	.103
Race of Interviewer	-.401†	.178
Mobilization	.670‡	.266
Constant	1.782‡	.638
Total Cases	680	
Nagelkerke R Square	.262	
Cases Predicted Correctly (%)	80.3	
-2 Log Likelihood	605.804	

‡ = $p < .01$, one-tailed test: † = $p < .05$, one-tailed test

Political Efficacy are significant and in the proposed directions). Party identification is significant, but positive. The hypothesis calls for a negative result, for Republicans were expected to re port voting at higher rates than Democrats, but this is not so.

Also, not true is the relevance of trust in government. While in the expected direction, Trust in Government is not significant.

Combined Model

The strategy to this point was to allow the different models to estimate black voter turnout and establish their worth on their own terms. By doing so, we can learn which factors for the respective models aid in our understanding of the correlates of black voter turnout. The second part of the strategy is to place all the variables from the different models in a single model to discover which factors hold up when others are allowed to have an independent contribution. That is, some variables that were or were not significant in other models may lose or gain significance in a full model, therefore, the creation of a combined model makes the drawing of conclusions more accurate.

Table 6 displays the logistic regression results of the Combined Model. Two very interesting patterns are readily apparent: (1) each variable that reached an acceptable level of statistical significance in the Social, Economic, and Demographic Model and Psychological Involvement Model remained significant and in the same direction and (2) none of the variables from the Black Group Consciousness Model and Institutional Involvement Model are statistically significant.

Major factors providing stimuli to black voting from the 1960s to the 1980s, race (black group consciousness) and race conscious-enhancing institutions (involvement in organizations, religion, and the black church) are no longer the effective institutions they once were at mobilizing the black electorate. Race has declined in significance. It appears that the dominant factors are race-neutral. Consistently influencing black-reported turnout are indicators of psychological involvement and standard social, economic, and demographic characteristics. Understandably the focus of scholars of black politics has been on race and black institutions, but these results suggest a return to the basics and further examination of the impact of participatory attitudes.

Table 6
Logistic Regression Model of All Variables

Independent Variables	b	SE
Social, Economic, and Demographic Characteristics Model		
Age	.036‡	.014
Education	.0364‡	.155
Family Income	-.043	.070
South	-.631†	.317
Gender	.539†	.312
Marriage	-.329	.368
Homeowner	.121	.274
Black Group Consciousness Model		
Group Identification	-.053	.140
Polar Affect	.007	.007
Polar Power	-.017	.220
Individual vs. System Blame	.381	.382
Institutional Involvement Model		
Black Organization	.322	.386
Community Organization	.220	.353
Religious Importance	-.173	.262
Church Attendance	.001	.137
Political Church	.162	.187
Psychological Involvement Model		
Party Identification	.266†	.152
Trust in Government	-.260	.239
Political Engagement	.821‡	.156
Political Efficacy	-.223	.148
Control Variables		
Race of Interviewer	-.822‡	.255
Mobilization	.544↑	.387
Constant	-1.043	1.510
Total Cases	441	
Nagelkerke R Square	.368	
Cases Predicted Correctly (%)	84.1	

↑ = $p < .10$, one-tailed test † = $p < .05$, one-tailed test ‡ = $p < .01$, one-tailed test

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to revisit the significance of race as a determinant of black electoral participation. Using the 1996 National Black Election Study and logistic regression, I sought to find out whether the factors in prior studies remain consistent predictors of black turnout in 1996. The reason for reexamining these effects was due to four features of American life and politics since 1960: (1) substantial economic gains by blacks, (2) the social trend in the black community that more blacks are switching church affiliation from participatory denominations to politically-inactive ones, (3) the use of contaminated, biased data taken during turbulent times that led to the focus on race as a facilitator of black political participation, and (4) the absence of polarizing, national, political figures such as the Reverend Jesse Jackson and Ronald Reagan.

I hypothesized that, based on these observations, the effects of racial solidarity, religion, and church would diminish in importance, leading to the increasing significance of race-neutral, psychological factors such as political engagement and political efficacy. My argument was that with affluence, race consciousness, reinforced through interaction with other blacks and through black institutions, declined, therefore, making factors not germane to race more instrumental in explaining black voter turnout. Also, religion and church suffered a loss of salience politically as more blacks left the mainstream Protestant denominations for others that are less political in nature, weakening the power of religion and church to get blacks to the polls. Thirdly, given the climate of protest and activism based on group demands and appeals in the Sixties, the importance of race was augmented, contaminating responses to surveys and making the levels of race and group consciousness artificially high. Lastly, America is void of prominent and influential political leaders who are diametrically opposed to each other on the issue of race. The Democratic and Republican parties discuss race in more neutral terms and the Democratic Party does not champion black interests explicitly as it did in the past, so the Republican Party

does not have to oppose them overtly like they did in the past. The black community especially lacks a national leader who embodies the ideals of the race and is effective in making the government responsive. This may be the reason for the results in Tables 3 and 6, namely that involvement in organizations that assist the black community in achieving its goals does not foster black electoral participation. Moreover, the decline of race may be broader and deeper than what is portrayed here, for Tate (1993) states that there is suggestive evidence that blacks are less favorable of a policy agenda that focuses exclusively on race. She cites a decline in black support for race-specific programs and race as a public policy matter over the last two decades.

A closer examination of the logistic regression results further yields additional evidence of the declining significance of race with respect to black political participation. In Table 3, three of the four variables measuring black group consciousness are significant, but all four fail to reach significance in the Combined Model shown in Table 6. Variables capturing the effects of participating in a black organization and a community organization and attending a political church were significantly related to reported turnout in Table 4, but they were not in the Combined Model. Therefore, continued support for the influence of race itself and institutional involvement is mixed at best. Yet, their usefulness as determinants of the black vote is questioned when they do not matter in a fully-specified model.

More evidence exists suggestively of the weak relationship between race and turnout. Group Identification is positively related to turnout in Table 3, but, though insignificant, has a negative direction in Table 6. With such results, group identification can no longer be thought as a reliable factor on black voter turnout. Further, while never significant, the perception of discrimination is negative in one model, Table 3, and positive in another, Table 6. Results from Tables 3 and 6 show that religion and church attendance are not important statistical factors. In both tables, Religious Importance and Church Attendance variables are not related to black voter turnout. Moreover, these variables

have the direction of depressing turnout in Table 3, but just Religious Importance has a negative coefficient in Table 6.

Perhaps there is some light at the end of the tunnel. Maybe the otherworldly and thisworldly schools of thought can coexist. A distinction needs to be made and more attention needs to be paid to what the schools are actually arguing. It appears to me that the otherworldly school of thought really focuses on religion and its effects on political participation and the thisworldly school of thought actually concentrates on the role of the church as an institutional entity, so religion can be an opiate and the church a mobilizer. When this is the case, the church just needs to work harder to overcome the depoliticizing effects of religion. Future research considering the effects of religion and church should be more mindful of their measuring techniques and ensure as I do that the two ideas are separated. Regardless, neither religion nor church is a consistent influence on black voter turnout.

While all black group consciousness and institutional involvement variables were unrelated to turnout in the Combined Model, each variable that reached an acceptable level of statistical significance in the Social, Economic, and Demographic Model and Psychological Involvement Model remained significant and in the same direction. Even the lone psychological involvement variable not to reach significance, Trust in Government, implicitly refute the instrumentality of race. Recall that scholars (Shingles 1981; Guterbock *et al.* 1983; Mangum 2003) argued governmental distrust encourages electoral participation, for blacks reason that the system is to blame for their relatively unfortunate status in society. Targeting the system, or government, as the scapegoat rather than themselves motivate blacks to participate in politics to improve their circumstances. However, whether blacks trust government does not matter, for the Trust in Government variable was not significant in the Psychological Involvement Model or in the Combined Model. One can conclude that blacks lack the desire to improve their social standing as a race. If trust in government does not have an im-

pact, then, according to the argument above, blacks do not have the motivation to act collectively to make the race better off economically, socially, or politically. Given that most of the social, economic, and demographic variables do help to explain turnout and psychological involvement is very instructive, black politics scholars should reorient their analyses to focus more on race-neutral indicators. That is, subsequent work should examine the general attitudes associated with political participation and the social circumstances of voters.

APPENDIX A

DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES FOR ANALYSIS OF BLACK VOTER TURNOUT

Dependent Variable

Turnout: In talking to people about elections, we find that a lot of people are not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. How about you, did you vote in the elections this November?: 1 = yes, 0 = no.

Independent Variables

Social, Economic, and Demographic Characteristics Model

Age (+) Age in years, ranging from 17-90.

Education (+) 1 = grade school (grades 1-8), 2 = some high school, no degree (grades 9-12), 3 = high school degree, 4 = some college, no degree, 5 = Associate's/ 2-year degree, Bachelor's/4-year degree, 6 = some graduate school, Master's degree, doctorate/law degree. Family Income (+) Combined income of all members of your family living with respondent, for 1995 before taxes. Range: 1 (up to $10,000) to 11 ($105,000 and more).

South (-) 1 = South. 0 = Non-South. Southern includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Gender (+): 1 = female, 0 = male.

Marriage (+): 1 = married, 0 = not married.

Homeowner (+): 1 = owns home, 0 = does not own home.

Black Group Consciousness Model

Group Identification (+) "Do you think what happens generally to Black people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life? Will it affect you a lot, some, or not very much?" 1=not very much, 2= some, 3= a lot.

Polar Affect (+) Absolute difference in feeling thermometer ratings, coded 0 to 100, between Blacks and Whites.

Polar Power (-)"On the whole, would you say that the economic position of Blacks is better, about the same, or worse than whites?" 1= worse, 2= same, 3= better.

Individual. vs. System Blame (+)"Three things often mentioned as problems facing Black people in this country are unemployment, discrimination and crime. Of these three, please tell me which do you think is the MOST important problem facing Black people?" 1 = discrimination, 0 = otherwise.

Institutional Involvement Model

Black Organization (+) "Are you a member of any organization working to improve the status of Black Americans?" 1 = yes, 0 = no.

Community Organization (+) "In the last twelve months, have you worked with others or joined an organization in your community to do something about some community problem?" 1 = yes, 0 = no.

Religious Importance (+) "Do you consider religion to be an important part of your life or not? Would you say that religion provides some guidance in your day-to-day living, quite a bit of guidance, or a great deal of guidance in your day-to-day life?" 1= some, 2 = quite a bit, 3 = a great deal.

Church Attendance (+) "Would you say you go to church or place of worship every week, almost every week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, or never?" 1 = never, 2 = a few times a year, 3 = once or twice a month, 4 = almost every week, 5 = every week, 6 = two or more times a week.

Political Church (+) "Have you heard any announcements or talks about the presidential campaign at your church or place of worship so far this year? Has your church or place of worship encouraged members to vote in this election?" 0= no discussion, 1= heard discussion, but not encouraged to vote, 2= discussion and encouraged to vote.

Psychological Involvement Model

Party Identification (-) "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, and Independent, or what?" 1 = Republican, 2 = Independent, 3 = Democrat.

Trust in Government (-) "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right--just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?" 1= never, 2= only some of the time, 3= most of the time, 4= just about always.

Follow Government (+) "Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?"1= hardly at all, 2= only now and then, 3= some of the time, 4= most of the time.

Interest in Campaigns (+) "Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you have been very much interested, somewhat interested, or not much interested in following the political campaigns this year?" 1= not much interested, 2= somewhat interested, 3= very interested.

Care Who Wins (+) "Generally speaking, would you say that you personally care a good deal who wins the presidential election this fall, or that you don=t care very much who wins?" 1= care good deal, 0= don=t care very much.

Public Officials Don=t Care (-) "Public officials don=t care much what people like me think." 1= disagree strongly, 2= disagree somewhat, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree somewhat, 5= agree strongly.

No Say in Government (-) "People like me don't have any say about what the government does." 1= disagree strongly, 2= disagree somewhat, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree somewhat, 5= agree strongly.

Government Too Complicated (-) "Sometimes politics and government seem to be so complicated that a person like me can=t really understand what=s going on." 1= disagree strongly, 2= disagree somewhat, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree somewhat, 5= agree strongly.

Control Variables

Race of Interviewer (-) "During the interview, did you think I was white, Black or someone of another group?" 1= Other, 2= white, 3= Black.

Mobilization (+) "Did anyone from one of the political parties call you or come around and talk to you about the campaign this year?" 1= yes, 0= no

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